

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
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The recent earthquakes, tsunami and nuclear emergency in Japan are incidents that naturally make people wonder about disaster preparedness. We certainly hope and pray those types of disasters don't happen here but no one ever knows for sure. Emergency Management, Fire and Police Agencies undergo extensive training and planning so personnel is ready if a disaster does strike. In this era when communication and news travel instantly, this can become a tremendous help but also a hindrance. The most important rule for residents to follow is to listen for instructions during an emergency. I realize that it can be difficult but you must trust that authorities will handle the situation. When the public needs to become aware, there are several outlets available so emergency personnel can let you know what's happening. Television, radio, cable television, reverse 911 and even the public address system on vehicles can be used to deliver immediate instructions quickly.

Keeping the public informed might be difficult, especially when crews are busy handling an emergency but you will receive instructions if needed. Authorities realize it is just as important to quell rumors and myths as it is to inform the public. Utilizing the Emergency Alert System, over radio and television, is an effective means to provide updates. If an emergency is happening, keep a local radio or television station on. Avoid calling emergency personnel; you risk distracting them and likely won't receive any additional information. Be sure to keep a portable radio with batteries on hand, in case power is lost. Most emergencies in our area are attributed to the weather, so living in New England actually prepares us better for such a situation. Living a few miles from the nuclear plant in Seabrook also provides us with other resources, so keep the calendar you received earlier this year.

Thanks to Emergency Management Director Don Swenson and the American Red Cross, I wanted to share some disaster preparedness information with readers this week. Being prepared is easy but needs to be done before something happens, especially when there is not much time to act. The first step to prepare is to assemble an "Emergency Kit." You should have a kit that you can take along, if you must leave your home. It should contain medication, a change of clothing, telephone numbers and items you may need access to. You should also assemble a kit to keep at your home, in case you are stranded for a few days. It should include a flashlight, battery powered radio, a three-day supply of water for everyone in the house, a blanket, pet supplies and even a first aid kit.

Secondly, discuss a plan with household members and review it once in awhile. Talk about what potential types of emergencies could happen and what to do, especially if you become separated. Cell phones and I-phones are great but it's a good idea to carry a list of contact telephone numbers too, just in case you lose service, as most people don't remember every number. Be familiar with evacuation plans and routes, so you know where students and residents will be taken if evacuated. Did you know Amesbury students would be taken to Methuen High School if evacuated? If an evacuation plan

were implemented, you should expect some roads to be closed or made one-way to facilitate the traffic flow.

Finally and most importantly, stay informed. In an emergency, it is crucial you be prepared for instructions and follow them. There can be several examples of an emergency: fires, toxic spills, severe storms and flooding to name a few. Most are attributed to the weather, keep up the forecast so you are not caught by surprise. Although it may be difficult to do, listen to what authorities are saying. As I mentioned before, extensive training and planning, as well as personal experience go into handling these types of situations. The safety of the public is always the priority of emergency personnel. An emergency can be a frightening experience but by working together, everyone will make it through.